

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms, comprising:

(a) contacting the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms with a first aqueous solution comprising a pH-adjusting agent effective to adjust the pH of the first aqueous solution to about 1.5 to 4.5, wherein the contact between the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms and the first aqueous solution is effective to reduce a microbial concentration on the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms, and wherein the mushrooms are contacted with the first aqueous solution for about 15 to 60 seconds, and

(b) contacting the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms with a second aqueous solution comprising a chelating agent and an antioxidant, wherein the second aqueous solution has a pH of about 7.0 to 9.0,

wherein the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms are contacted with the second aqueous solution after being contacted with the first aqueous solution.

Claim 2 (Canceled)

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving mushrooms according to claim 1, ~~[[2,]]~~ wherein the mushrooms are whole mushrooms, sliced mushrooms or mixtures thereof.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms are rinsed with water before contacting the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms with the first aqueous solution.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, ~~[[5,]]~~ wherein the first aqueous solution has a pH of about 2.0 to 3.0.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 5, wherein the first aqueous solution has a pH of about 2.2 to 2.6.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the pH-adjusting agent comprises citric acid, ascorbic acid, erythorbic acid, acetic acid, lactic acid, malic acid or mixtures thereof.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 7, wherein the pH-adjusting agent comprises citric acid.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the first aqueous solution comprises sodium chloride in an amount of about 0.1 to 2.0% by weight.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the first aqueous solution comprises sodium erythorbate in an amount of about 0.1 to 5.0% by weight.

Claims 11 and 12 (Canceled)

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, ~~[[12,]]~~ wherein the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms are contacted with the first aqueous solution for about 30 to 45 seconds.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms are rinsed with water after step (a) and before step (b), and wherein the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms are rinsed with water after step (b).

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the second aqueous solution comprises a high-pH adjusting agent comprising sodium bicarbonate, sodium erythorbate, sodium carbonate, sodium citrate, sodium hydroxide, sodium lactate, sodium hypophosphite, sodium acetate, potassium bicarbonate, ~~potassium bicarbonate~~, potassium carbonate, potassium citrate, potassium hydroxide or mixtures thereof.

Claim 16 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 15, wherein the second aqueous solution comprises sodium bicarbonate in an amount of about 0.1 to 5.0% by weight.

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the antioxidant comprises sodium erythorbate, ascorbic acid or mixtures thereof.

Claim 18 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the antioxidant is present in an amount of about 0.1 to 10.0% by weight.

Claim 19 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the chelating agent comprises calcium-disodium EDTA, disodium EDTA or mixtures thereof.

Claim 20 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the chelating agent is present in an amount of about 0.01 to 5.0% by weight.

Claim 21 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms are contacted with the second aqueous solution for about 1 second to 5 minutes.

Claim 22 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 21, wherein the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms are contacted with the second aqueous solution for about 15 to 60 seconds.

Claim 23 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 22, wherein the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms are contacted with the second aqueous solution for about 30 to 45 seconds.

Claim 24 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the second aqueous solution has a pH of about 7.5 to 8.5.

Claim 25 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 24, wherein the second aqueous solution has a pH of about 7.8 to 8.2.

Claim 26 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, further comprising:

(c) blowing air over the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms to evaporate an amount of water present on the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms, wherein step (c) is conducted after step (b).

Claim 27 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the step (b) is effective to raise the pH at the

surface of the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms to a pH of 6.2 to 6.8 ~~substantially neutral pH~~
~~value.~~

Claim 28 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~
mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms are not
contacted with an aqueous solution having a pH greater than 7.0 prior to the step (a).

Claim 29 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~
mushrooms, comprising:

(a) contacting the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms with a first aqueous solution
comprising a pH-adjusting agent effective to adjust the pH of the first aqueous solution to
about 1.5 to 4.5, wherein the contact between the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms and the
first aqueous solution is effective to reduce a microbial concentration on the ~~fruits, vegetables~~
~~or mushrooms, and wherein the mushrooms are contacted with the first aqueous solution for~~
about 15 to 60 seconds, and

(b) contacting the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms with a second aqueous solution
comprising:

(i) a chelating agent selected from the group consisting of calcium-disodium
EDTA, disodium EDTA and a mixture thereof; and

(ii) an antioxidant selected from the group consisting of sodium erythorbate,
ascorbic acid and a mixture thereof,

wherein the second aqueous solution has a pH of about 7.0 to 9.0,

wherein the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms are contacted with the second aqueous
solution after being contacted with the first aqueous solution.

Claim 30 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 29, wherein the ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms are not contacted with an aqueous solution having a pH greater than 7.0 prior to the step (a).

Claim 31 (Currently Amended): Method for preserving ~~fruits, vegetables or~~ mushrooms according to claim 29, wherein the pH of the first aqueous solution is about 2.2 to 2.6, and the pH of the second aqueous solution is about 7.8 to 8.2.

Claim 32 (New): Method for preserving mushrooms according to claim 1, wherein the first and second aqueous solutions are contacted with the mushrooms by spraying the solutions.

Claim 33 (New): Method for preserving mushrooms according to claim 29, wherein the first and second aqueous solutions are contacted with the mushrooms by spraying the solutions.